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ABSTRACT

This book traces the first year of a magnet school called Mega Center for Learning, established in 1990 in a large midwestern urban school district. It focuses on how the primary metaphors embedded in school documents and in stakeholders' perceptions and practices helped or hindered reform. Data were obtained from classroom observation; informal conversations; observations of assemblies and meetings; interviews with teachers, staff, the principal, and two district-level administrators; observation of the principal; focus-group interviews with parents and students, and document analysis. Following the introductory chapter, chapter 2 describes the research design. The third chapter surveys the history of schooling in the United States since the late 1800s, emphasizing metaphors included in major movements. Chapter 4 examines the power of metaphor, looks at what researchers are suggesting as changing roles and relationships in schools, and links these two ideas to the notion of school culture. Chapters 5 through 8 address Mega Center's four major institutional metaphors--vision, families, teams, and vision-keeper--showing the influence of these metaphors on changing educational practices and on the school's culture. Chapter 9 links the major metaphors operative during Meta Center's first year and the diverse images of schooling found in the history of school reform. Suggestions for forging stronger links between language and practice are offered. Reformers cannot assume that stakeholders share common metaphors. It is important to examine the metaphorical underpinnings of language and the effects of metaphors on change efforts. (Contains 82 references.) (LMI)

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